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SPEECH

OF

MR. BEDINGER OF VIRGINIA,

ON THE

OREGON QUESTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JANUARY 15, 1846.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED AT THE UNION OFFICE.

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on the resolution giving the twelve months' notice for the termination of the joint occupancy of the Oregon territory.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, Mr. BEDINGER addressed the committee as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The magnitude and great importance of the question at present under discussion, the intense interest manifested by the whole country in its progress and in its decision, and the very able manner in which it has been treated by those who have already participated in its discussion, cause me to approach it with the greatest hesitancy.

But it is due to those whom I have the honor to represent, as well as to myself, that, before recording my vote upon a question of such magnitude and grave importance, I should render a reason for the vote I shall give, and for the course of conduct which I shall deem it my duty to pursue. I therefore respectfully solicit the attention of the committee whilst, in as brief a manner as I possibly can, I proceed to state the causes which have influenced me, and led my mind to that conclusion at which it has arrived.

I confess, sir, that this question has been to me one of exceeding perplexity, doubt, and difficulty; and, although I have succeeded in convincing my own mind as to the course which it is proper that this House and this country should pursue in regard to it—although I have found reasons amply satisfactory to my own judgment, yet I am not from believing or hoping that I shall have the ability or good fortune to convince others—in this hall at least—that my judgment is not led me into false positions and untenable ground. That this question should appear, to one of my small experience, difficult and perplexing, could not excite the wonder of any person. For the older, and wiser, and more experienced heads than mine have been much puzzled by its consideration, and many an anxious hour of painful hesitation has been occasioned those who have most carefully examined it, and are most familiar with it.

We have, on the one hand, the masterly view of the subject taken by the Executive in that admirable State paper, his annual message, and doubtless the weight of his opinion and recommendation is, indeed it should be, very sensibly felt both here and elsewhere. The opinion of the Executive is sustained and strengthened by the beautiful and invaluable reasoning of the Secretary of State, who, by the triumph which he has achieved over the British diplomatist, has convinced the world—the rational and impartial world at least—that the claims of his country are founded in truth and justice, and cannot be thrown by sophistry or fraud. This opinion is supported, moreover, by many able heads and patriotic hearts, both here and elsewhere—by noble and

gallant spirits, who seem already to be panting for an opportunity to hurl the gauntlet to our haughty opponent and rival, and challenge her at once to mortal combat; and I confess, sir, that when I reflect upon the overbearing and domineering spirit of Great Britain, I feel as much disposed as any one else possibly can, to raise my voice, and, if need be, my arm also, in opposition to her. No man's heart glows with fiercer indignation than mine, when the wrongs and aggressions of that relentless power are arrayed before me. Nevertheless, sir, I must be allowed to express the fear that it has been with others as it was, at first, with myself—they have suffered their patriotism to obscure their judgments, and their indignation against Great Britain to hurry them into a line of conduct not the most politic, and not the most wise. For myself, sir, having the character at home, (and I fear elsewhere also,) of being rather hot-headed, I have felt a little afraid of surrendering myself wholly to the impulses of my nature in this matter; and, exerting myself to the utmost to subdue my belligerent spirit, I have succeeded in arriving at the conclusion, that although Great Britain richly deserves from us a thorough drubbing, yet she can afford to wait for it a while, (it will come in time, sir—it will come in time,) and we can afford to postpone the infliction of it at least for the present. And for this reason, among others, I do not think it politic or wise, at this moment, to throw down the gauntlet to her by so suddenly dissolving the present existing state of affairs between her and ourselves in our disputed territory.

Let us look at this question for one moment, if we can possibly do so, calmly and dispassionately. I know that gentlemen generally use these words by way of preface to the fiercest outbursts and most impassioned appeals. But I would respectfully beg gentlemen to calm themselves, and look carefully at this question. First, then, I will cheerfully admit that the man who now doubts that our title to the whole of Oregon is, as against Great Britain, "clear and unquestionable," must be cursed by nature with remarkable stupidity, or he must be blinded by ignorance and prejudice. If any such person there be, I refer him to the correspondence between the Secretary of State and the British minister. If that does not convince him, I give him up in despair. It would be presumption in me to attempt to satisfy such a judgment. And this is all, sir, that I intend to say upon this part of the subject. Oregon is ours—every acre, every poor rood of it—and we must and will have it. There is another fact equally as clear and unquestionable as the one just admitted—"an axiomatic fact," in the words of the gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. COMB.] and one

as little to be questioned as the former—and that is that this great territory is of such immense value and importance to this Union, that we would deserve to be regarded as idiots by the civilized world, if we should suffer any portion of it to be wrested from us by any power upon earth. No gentleman can possibly desire these facts to be more broadly and clearly admitted than I am willing to admit them. And, sir, it is for these very reasons—on account of these very facts, thus admitted—because Oregon is ours—because we should not surrender one pound of Oregon earth, one rock, one pebble, one tree, or one shrub—that I cannot, for the life of me, perceive the wisdom of terminating, thus abruptly and hastily, the convention between this country and Great Britain in regard to that territory. And if I had any weight or influence here or elsewhere—if I did not know that the poor words which shall escape my lips will fall cold and dead on the unheeding ears of those around me, to be forgotten even before the echoes of my voice shall have died in this hall—if I were not discouraged by this apprehension, I would, with all the earnestness and all the sincerity of my nature, call upon those who so zealously advocate it, and implore them to pause before pushing this policy to the extreme; they jeopardize or defeat the very object they have in view. Sir, how should a grave and deliberative body, such as this House should be, act upon a matter of such vital importance? What line of policy should a great nation, such as ours, pursue in a crisis such as this? I beg that I may not be deemed presumptuous, if I dare to suggest what occurs to my poor judgment as the wisest course we could possibly pursue.

First, then, this thing should stop where it is. Not another word should be spoken—not another effort at compromise or negotiation attempted. The negotiations have ceased, they are dead, and thus they should remain, never again to be revived. If any proposition should hereafter come from Great Britain—if she should now offer to take the 49th deg—nay, if she should declare herself content to receive the one-half of what we formerly offered her—though we should not scout her proposition, yet we should promptly reject it. We should say to her, “we cannot agree, and we want no compromise; twenty-five years of negotiation have failed; we shall try that no longer; we have demonstrated our title, and we are determined to maintain it, but we choose to bide our time.” What next, sir? “Masterly inactivity” on our part? No, sir; no inactivity, masterly or otherwise. But action, action, action, prompt, ready, energetic, immediate, and continued action, on the part of this government. Every possible inducement should be held out to our brave emigrants to go forth and possess the land, which we should give them as an inheritance. A Territorial government should be formed there, and a governor appointed at once. Where the cross of St. George waves over one fortification in that territory, the stars and stripes should float over two. Forts and block-houses should dot the whole of the “Oregon trail;” armed troops should guard our citizens in their emigrations thither; the flag of their country should float over them; the countenance of their country should be upon them; the arm of their country should be stretched out to protect them, and the American eagle should fly before them, heralding them on the rich lands of Oregon. They should have no cause to cry out

that their country neglects or deserts them. The overland mail recommended by the Executive should be established at once. Every barrier which might impede the tide of emigration should be broken down; every inducement which might increase it should be offered. The tribes of Indians now disposed to be hostile to us, should be conciliated, and quieted by Indian agents who should be appointed, and who should have purses, which they might use to some purpose. Sir, it does seem to me, if this policy were pursued, amplified, and improved as it might be by the congregated wisdom of this nation, it does seem to me that all the powers upon earth could not rend from our grasp the rich prize for which we are contending. See, sir, if I have not some tolerable authority for the course I have recommended. I find in the Union of the 7th instant, a very able article upon this question, from which I beg leave to read the following extract:

“The posture of our interests in Oregon is as novel as this new aspect of our title. Our citizens have now gone, and are going forth in masses, to possess themselves of their broad patrimony there. Before Congress rises, ten thousand American citizens, tilling the soil of that territory, will stretch out their arms to us, for the protection which is their most manifest right,” &c.

So it seems, that before this Congress shall rise, ten thousand hardy settlers will have established themselves in Oregon. When this Congress commenced its session there were but seven thousand, when it shall rise, there will be ten thousand. And this, too, without any positive guarantee upon the part of their government of its countenance and protection. Sir, if there shall be ten thousand settlers in that territory when Congress shall rise, how many may we fairly infer there will be there at the expiration of five, or even three, brief years? The calculation is easily made, sir; I beg gentlemen to pause and make it. We shall have a sufficient number to bid defiance to the Hudson Bay Company and all its agents; enough of themselves to maintain and defend the whole territory; or, at least, enough to raise provision to maintain any army we may send there to aid and defend them. And cannot gentlemen wait five short years? Can they not wait three? Can they not even tarry till Congress shall rise? Sir, the territory will not take to itself wings and flee away; it will not be swallowed up in the Pacific, nor be wholly devoured by the British lion. If we will but “tarry at Jericho till our beards shall grow out,” Oregon shall be ours when our faces shall be covered with hair! Am I to be answered in the words of the honorable gentleman from Indiana, [Mr. KENNEDY,] that this would be “stealing the country;” that it would be “creeping and crawling into the country, and acting in bad faith.” No such thing, sir. All this should be done in the broad face of heaven and the world. We have said to Great Britain, “Oregon is ours;” and, we should add, “we mean to maintain our rights to every portion of it; we do not choose to fight for it at this moment, but we are getting ready, and we mean to get ready.” Would this be acting in bad faith?

Shall I again be answered, that unless this notice is given immediately emigration will cease? That Great Britain is establishing herself more and more firmly every day, and that in a short time our citizens will be afraid to venture there? It is too late to urge this objection, when they have already, even without the countenance and protection of our government, poured on in one continued stream to that

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country. It would be utterly impossible for the Hudson Bay Company to resist or check this tide of western emigration if thus encouraged. That company, with all the hunters and trappers it could muster, would present no stronger barrier to this tide of emigration, than would a mud wall to the swelling waters of the broad Potomac.

Shall it be said, that in the meantime the Hudson Bay Company will be exhausting the fur trade, and reaping all the profits to be derived from it? Sir, if we claim Oregon only for the sake of its beaver skins, it occurs to me that we have been shamefully negligent heretofore. For the fur trade is diminishing rapidly, and hitherto Great Britain has derived almost exclusively the benefit from it. But, sir, we desire Oregon for purposes far more important. Meanwhile, as the fur trade diminishes, as the buffalo recedes, and the beaver is hunted out, so will the servants and agents of the Hudson Bay Company gradually retire, and leave us in possession of the territory. Or shall this policy, which I have had the temerity to propose, meet with the objection urged with much plausibility and force by another gentleman from Indiana, [Mr. OWEN,] namely—that our emigration would not extend itself north of the Columbia river, or north of latitude 49°? I admit, sir, that there is a great deal of plausibility and some strength in that objection; for, although it is fanciful and chimerical to suppose (with that gentleman) that the Hudson Bay Company can afford to buy up our citizens like cattle in the market, at the high price of eight hundred dollars per head, yet it is quite probable that, under the existing state of things, our settlers will in a great measure confine themselves to that portion of the territory south of 49°. But, sir, with all due deference to the gentleman from Indiana, [Mr. OWEN,] I do not care if they do. It is, for all purposes of future action and defence, better that they should. They will be more concentrated, and consequently stronger. There is land enough, heaven knows; and for many years to come there will be no crowding. And it is certainly more desirable that our citizens should for the present be as compact and concentrated as possible, than that they should be scattered over the whole territory. But, sir, we are triumphantly asked by the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. Cobb] “what shall we gain by delay—what have we ever gained by delay?” Sir, we shall gain time—Time, to us more precious than great riches or many jewels—Time, the tomb-builder and the overturner of thrones—Time, who strikes the old with decrepitude and lends vigor and strength to the young. Sir, there is another “axiomatic” fact which may be gathered from records of history—and it is this: that nations, like individuals, pass through the stages of infancy, manhood, and old age; we see them springing up from small beginnings—mere germs as it were—growing up by degrees, increasing daily and hourly in strength and power, until they reach the very summit of earthly greatness, and “play fantastic tricks before high heaven.” Then, with old age, come dissolution and decay; and as in the human body decrepitude and disease mark the ravages of time, so in the body politic, corruption rears her loathsome form, one shock after another smites the tottering fabric, and each and every symptom declares how surely and how rapidly she is descending into the tomb of ages.

Thus is it with ourselves and our haughty rival. We are in the vigor of youth, increasing every year

in prosperity and power. Great Britain, though she may not have reached that period when we may look for her speedy topping downfall, yet she has evidently passed her prime. She smacks of age. Many gray hairs are discernible upon her brow, and some symptoms of dotage are manifestly perceptible; and although I will admit that old John Bull is a stout old bully, yet, nevertheless, each wave that dashes from the ocean of Time saps and undermines some portion of his wide dominions, whilst its every heave is lifting aloft this giant republic of the western world. Let me not be misunderstood. I believe, if compelled to measure our strength with Great Britain, we are even now more than a match for her, though I am reminded of a very sensible remark made to me on a certain occasion by one of my constituents, a man of gigantic physical powers, and remarkable for his bravery, as well as for his good nature. He had a neighbor, also a Hercules for strength and prowess, who was constantly disturbing him with petty annoyances. He frequently complained to me of this neighbor's conduct; and I said to him, upon one occasion, “Why do you not lick him: you are able to do it.” “Yes, sir, (he replied,) I know that I can lick him, but it will strain me to do it; and I don't choose to undertake it until I am actually compelled.” Now, sir, there was wisdom in the remark. May we not profit by it? I know that we can lick Great Britain; but believe me it would “strain” us to do it; and we had better postpone it until there is no alternative, and then we will do it.

Thus, sir, we shall gain time by postponing this matter; and every hour, every moment thus gained is of vital importance to us. And in reply to the question, “What have we gained by delay?” I answer, we have gained this at least: we have gained seven or ten thousand hardy emigrants in the disputed territory; we have gained the advantage of having demonstrated our title in the face of the world; and once more, I repeat, we have gained time. Will any man pretend to say that we are not better prepared now to defend our rights in Oregon, than we were under the administrations of Mr. Monroe, or Mr. Adams, or Gen. Jackson? Suppose we had suffered ourselves at that time to have been hurried headlong into a contest about this matter, does any one doubt that we would have jeopardized, if we had not absolutely lost, the whole of the territory? Has this time, then, been lost to us? Have we rested on our oars for nothing? No, sir, we are better prepared now than we were then, and we shall be fully prepared in a few brief years. But gentlemen ask *when*—when will we be prepared to assert our rights? I answer, we are ready now, if the worst comes to the worst. We are ready to maintain them by arms even now, if we shall be compelled to do so. But of this there is no danger, if we pursue a wise and prudent policy. And we shall be infinitely better prepared when, at the expiration of a few years, we shall have twenty or thirty thousand rifles in Oregon, and emigrants sufficient to cultivate the soil, and raise corn and beef to maintain any army we may send to protect them. An army which should be sent there now, would have to subsist upon “mule and dog”—[see Fremont's expedition]—poor food for fighting men, I take it, sir; but in a few years we shall have citizens there, the fruits of whose labors will maintain any army sent to protect them. Then we will be ready, sir, and then we will strike.

—But again, it was said by the gentleman from

Georgia, [Mr. Cobb,] that unless this notice be given immediately, England and the world will be induced to believe that the American Congress and people are disposed not to sustain, but to desert, the Executive and the administration. But can any such inference be fairly drawn, if we pursue the proper policy? Suppose we adopt every step proposed, and every measure recommended by the Executive, barring only this solitary one of immediate notice; suppose we follow the recommendations of the President as to the establishment of a Territorial government, the appointment of a governor, and Indian agents, the erection of block-houses and forts for the protection of our citizens, the overland mail, and the inducements to emigration, &c.: will any man go forth from this hall and say that we are disposed to desert the administration? Will it have that appearance in the eyes of the world? No, sir; it is ungenerous and unjust to make this charge against us; and whoever will make this charge against me, will do me four injustices and slander me. But once again: it is urged that the honor of the country is at stake; and if the notice be not given, it will suffer in the estimation of the world. Sir, by the course of policy which I have proposed, the American Eagle shall not moult a feather, he shall not droop a wing. American honor shall remain as pure and intact as before, and the American name, for prudence, moderation, and wisdom, shall stand even higher than it now does among the nations of the earth. What, sir, have we slumbered thus long, through more than a quarter of a century, upon this convention, forgetful of our national honor, to awake thus suddenly and find it assailed or tarnished? What has Great Britain so recently done in this matter to impugn our honor? We have illustrated to the world the validity of our title. We now say to Great Britain, "Oregon is ours, and we mean in time to possess ourselves of every inch of it." Will the national honor suffer by this course? I think not, sir.

But now, sir, allow me to call the attention of the committee to the other side of this question. Imagine that to be done which I am afraid will be done shortly. Imagine this notice to be given, Great Britain to have received it, and the next vessel that leaves her island to bear to us from her a proposition to this effect: "We have failed to compromise this matter; you have ordered us out of the territory; we feel no disposition to fight with you; we do not desire war; give us now that which you have three several times offered us; divide the territory at the 49th degree of north latitude; we will cheerfully take the northern portion, leaving you the southern; this matter shall end, and we will sit down by you as friends, and shake hands with you as brothers." Imagine such a proposition as that coming from Great Britain immediately after notice given. Is the possibility so very remote that gentlemen cannot give it their reflection or consideration? Every advocate of immediate notice persists in declaring that Great Britain cannot fight, and will not fight for Oregon. Then if she cannot and will not fight, I say the chances are ten to one that she will make some such offer as I have mentioned. And if she shall do this, I respectfully beg of the next gentleman who shall take this floor on that side of the question, to march up manfully and at once to the question, and inform me what course the country and the administration should pursue? Should the administration accept the proposition, or should it reject it? I already see gentlemen around me—"immediate notice" men too—who are nodding assent, and by significant gestures

intimating that such a proposition should be accepted. I see others, warm advocates of the notice also, shaking their heads, and by indignant frowns answering "never! never!"

Sir, the thing is palpable; Great Britain by such a proposition, after notice given, would place the administration in a dilemma from which it would have no resource but in selecting the blunter or the softer horn. For if the administration should accede to the proposition, it would raise such a storm of opposition North, South, East, and West, as would shake, if not entirely overthrow it. The clamor would be raised, the cry would go forth, "You have sacrificed our rights, you have forfeited our interests, you have frittered away the better portion of our glorious territory, you have acted with timidity, imbecility, you have 'backed out,' we can no longer support you." If, on the contrary, the administration should reject such a proposition, public dissatisfaction would be even more violent and more to be dreaded. For it would be said that they had wantonly plunged us into a war, when they might have avoided it by compromise! Will gentlemen condescend to give this view of the question their consideration, and answer it frankly and fairly, if they can?

Now, take the other view of this subject. Suppose Great Britain, after having received our notice, shall make us no proposition, and refuse to compromise? The only question which can then arise is this, Will she, at the expiration of the twelve months, abandon what she considers her rights in Oregon, or will she prepare to maintain them by arms? I think, sir, no one can be found who seriously entertains the opinion that she will quietly pull up her stakes, chain her lions together, and remove to Canada, leaving us in possession of the territory for which she has been contending thirty years. If she will not do this, she must fight; and if she does fight, I ask gentlemen what will be the consequences of the contest? I speak now, not of the consequences to the North, or South, or East, or West, but to Oregon itself, and I call upon gentlemen to inform me by what possible means, in case of war, that territory can be preserved to this Union? Ye gentlemen of the West, I call upon you to answer me this question. Bold and daring, patriotic, and generous, and fearless as you are, by what means shall you rescue Oregon in case of war? You have the wills, you have the hearts, you have the patriotism more than sufficient, but trust me, gentlemen, you have not the power. You cannot do it—I tell you cannot do it. You may conquer Canada—you may whip Great Britain on land and sea—you may astonish the world by the success of your arms,—but the first result of the war will be the loss of Oregon; and if it is ever recovered, it will only be after the fiercest and most bloody contest ever recorded in your country's history. You must lose Oregon, because, before any army which you can possibly send to protect it, the steamers of Great Britain will already have arrived there. The Hudson Bay Company, with the thousands of Indian scalping knives at its command, are there already. The mouth of the Columbia and the whole Pacific would be guarded by British vessels, from whence supplies could easily be furnished to British armies in the territory. Whilst our army, even if it should arrive in time, would find no possible means of subsistence, and must either speedily return or perish. And having once gotten possession of the territory, you would find that years of de-

perate fighting would not expel Great Britain from it, though a few years of peace will inevitably do it.

But again, sir, we have some seven thousand citizens—men, women, and children—now in that territory; and while, with one breath, gentlemen are calling upon us to come to their rescue, to guard and protect our brave emigrants in Oregon, they, with the very next, are advocating a measure which, next month, perhaps, will unsheath the knife which is to shed their blood!

Sir, while the eloquent gentleman from Indiana [Mr. KENNEDY] was speaking, and convulsing the committee with his wit and humor, I could not help thinking how discordantly those sounds of merriment would fall upon the ears of our citizens in Oregon, if it were possible they should reach them.

Sir, I appeal to that gentleman now, I appeal to him in behalf of the women and children now in Oregon—in behalf of those companions of his boyhood, of whom he spoke—those connexions of kindred blood, reared at the same hearth, and taught in the same school-house with himself. For them I appeal to him, and ask him how he can expose them, thus cut off as they are from the protection of their country, to such cruel dangers? Sir, I say to that gentleman, in the words of one of America's most distinguished statesmen, "the voice of humanity issues from the shades of the wilderness; it exclaims that, while one hand is lifted up to dissolve this convention, the other grasps the tomahawk. It summons our imaginations to scenes that will open. It is no great effort of the imagination to conceive that events, so near, have already begun. I can fancy that I listen to the yells of savage vengeance, and to the shrieks of torture! Already they seem to sigh on the western wind; already they mingle with every echo from the mountains." Sir, is all this idle declamation? Is there no reality in the picture? Are not our brave emigrants there wholly without defence, without protection? They are there with their wives and their little ones, cultivating the soil in peace, causing the wilderness to bloom as a garden. But if war shall be declared, long before any protection can reach them from us, their blackened dwellings will stand as smouldering monuments of our neglect, while their scattered bones will whiten the prairies. They will either be taken prisoners, and forcibly converted into British subjects, or else they will be given over to the tomahawk and scalping-knife. I know they have strong arms, and stout and fearless hearts; but they cannot cope, unaided, with the military power of Great Britain and her savage allies. And when they cry to us for help, is it by such policy as this that gentlemen are prepared to help them.

And now, sir, I would respectfully ask my western friends to place a little more confidence in the pledges of their southern brethren. It is not right nor generous in them to accuse the South of the selfish disposition to avoid this contest on her own account, and in consideration of her own interests only. We pledge them southern integrity and southern honor that we will stand by them in the hour of need. We differ with them as to the policy proper to be pursued; we do not think the time has arrived for terminating the present convention. But if gentlemen will do it—if they choose to assume the responsibility—then, when the deed is done—when the die is cast—when the Rubicon is crossed—turn your eyes to the South, and if you find one recreant bosom there, call me no prophet.

Meanwhile, all that I ask of the gentleman from Indiana, [Mr. KENNEDY] who declared that, in the action upon the Texas question, "the West went it blind"—all that I ask of him is that he will not "go it blind" upon Oregon. Let gentlemen study well the steps they are about to take, and when they are taken the South will not flinch. We will lend our best exertions, and pour out our best blood, to snatch Oregon from the grasp of the foe. But it is not kind or generous to taunt us now. The South dreads not this contest on her own account more than other portions of this Union, and possibly not half so much as some. And it is a foul aspersion upon her character to say that she trembles because she is "weak and helpless, defenceless and slaveholding." And I will say to the person [Mr. GARDNER, of Ohio] who threw out the base suggestion, that the South is able to defend her rights, not only on her own sunny plains, against the bloody efforts of reckless incendiaries, but on this floor and elsewhere, against the federal encroachments of him and his party upon the constitution of the country. And I say to him further, that there are bondsmen in the South—negro slaves there, who have ever been more true and more faithful to their masters—to the hands which feed and cherish them—than he has ever been to his country or its constitution. And should he, and his cherished allies and friends, the "black regiments from the West Indies," attempt an invasion of southern soil, there are negro slaves there who would meet him at the thresholds of their masters' dwellings, and scourge him home! (Here Mr. BRIDGEMAN was called to order by the chair on the ground of personality.)

A great deal has been said in this House against the character of Great Britain, and gentlemen have seemed to vie with each other in the use of opprobrious epithets against her. I do not desire to be behind-hand, even in this matter, sir, and I have therefore selected from a very humorous letter-writer to the New York Herald, certain expressions admirably suited to the occasion. That writer declares that Great Britain is a "damned, incorrigible, insatiable, unappeasable, insatiable, unrelenting, never-yielding, always-grasping, never-receding, always-encroaching, unconscionable bloody pirate!" Not having skill sufficient to find words of my own wherewith to express my indignation against Great Britain, I have been compelled to borrow them; and if any gentlemen can find stronger, or more appropriate, I should like to hear them. But, sir, what has this to do with the question? And why do gentlemen waste their time and their energies in such idle vituperation? Sir, when the strong man girds his loins and nerves his arm for some death grapple with a foe worthy of his efforts, if he be wise he is generally chary of his breath, and wastes not his wind in idle invectives, which he knows will fall unheeded on the ears of his adversary. Will the railing against Great Britain spike one of her guns, or burst the boilers of one of her steamships? I fear not.

Much also has been spoken here in praise of the American eagle; and that bird has been compelled, of late, to take a vast deal of unnecessary exercise, "pluming his wings and soaring aloft," and "soaring aloft and pluming his wings."

Sir, I happen to know something of the race of that great monarch of the feathered tribe. I know who, like myself, have stood amid the sublime scenery at Harper's Ferry, and watched him there.

in his favorite haunts, now perched in solitary grandeur on some tall peak or towering crag—now wheeling into the heavens with his eye upon the sun—those who have delighted to watch him thus, know something of his nature and his habits. They know that he is never rash, that he makes no unnecessary noise, or idle fluttering; that he never strikes until he is ready, and when he does strike, it is with the rapidity and deadly certainty of heaven's lightning! I witnessed there, upon one occasion, sir, a scene which I wish I had the skill or ability to depict to this committee, for it was very beautiful. There was a black, lowering, and portentous cloud in the west, charged with thunder; over its dark bosom the red lightning gleamed and danced, and the voice of the thunder came forth in tones which shook the hills. An eagle came swooping on from the east, directly in the face of the cloud itself. Onward he came with the rapidity of an arrow, seemingly resolved to penetrate the dark barrier, and make his onward way in spite of all resistance. Now he plunged into the dark bosom of the cloud,

as if determined to snatch the lightnings of heaven. Anon he wheeled aloft as if resolved to scale its summit; and his shriek came forth in fierce defiance of the angry thunder. But, suddenly, he made one majestic swoop—not backward, sir, no retreat in his nature—but directly along the very verge of the cloud, skirting the Blue Ridge, and perched himself upon one of its loftiest peaks. He paused one moment, with bowed wings and glancing eyes—the cloud blew over without even the smallest pattering of rain, the sun came out again from the cloudless heaven, the eagle sprang from his perch, and pursued his course far in the dim regions of the trackless West!

So, sir, might it be with us, if we could but curb our impetuosity and imprudence, if we could but pause and ponder, and wait, for a brief period; the dark cloud now lowering upon our political horizon would pass away, without difficulty or danger, and the "American eagle" would take its onward flight, unresisted and unopposed, to the rich regions of Oregon.

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